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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5304
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3034
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2899
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3548
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASHGABAT 000741

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: NATO LIAISON PESSIMISTIC ABOUT COOPERATION WITH
TURKMENISTAN

REF: ASHGABAT 677

Classified By: Charge Richard Miles, Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) On June 10, visiting NATO Liaison officer, Evan Tracz, painted a negative picture about NATO-Turkmenistan cooperation for a group of political officers from the Polish, German, UK, Turkish and U.S. Embassies. The reason for Tracz's meetings with Turkmen officials was to solicit their renewed interest in NATO's Science for Peace and Security program. In the case of Turkmenistan, NATO proposed a project to remediate Soviet-era radioactive waste from iodine and bromide plants in Hazar and Balkanabat. Soviet practice involved mixing the radioactive waste with coal and setting it aside. According to Tracz, NATO delivered remediation assistance a few years ago, providing consultations and some equipment. Following the February visit of NATO Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia, Robert Simmons, it was agreed to restart the radioactive material remediation project. Tracz's current visit was the follow-up to that proposal, but Tracz said the meetings with Turkmen officials were not productive. The Turkmen side was waiting for suggestions from NATO. Although the Turkmenkhimiya State Concern was the state agency dealing with the problem, Tracz remarked that "they treat it like a secret." He also mentioned that a Russian company had been hired by the Turkmen to deal with some of the radioactive materials (reftel). Tracz said NATO "will not keep knocking on the door and will not follow-up on this project beyond this visit if the Turkmen Government does not pursue it."

¶2. (C) The other area of potential NATO-Turkmenistan cooperation that Tracz mentioned was a proposed seminar on civil emergency planning. In Tracz' meeting at the Ministry of Defense (MOD), it was mentioned that the existing Civil Emergency Committee will be separated from the MOD and become a ministry. At the same time, Tracz's impression was that nothing has been done to implement this plan, although Turkmen officials recognize the need for such a ministry given the country's location in an earthquake zone. The Turkmen side discussed this issue during the Simmons visit and NATO proposed holding a civil emergency planning seminar in Ashgabat on June 11-12. The Turkmen did not reply to the offer until June 10, informing NATO that the seminar could begin the next day. Tracz thought the seminar would take

place sometime later this year. He suggested that for NATO cooperation it would be a big step forward in light of Turkmenistan's neutrality policy and reluctance to engage with NATO.

¶3. (C) During the Simmons visit, President Berdimuhamedov gave a flat no to NATO's request for ISAF transit rights to Afghanistan. Instead, Turkmenistan handles overflight approvals for ISAF flights on a bilateral basis, and has told NATO that it prefers to continue that way. Nonetheless, Tracz said he would raise the issue of a blanket overflight for ISAF at NATO Headquarters as a way to relieve the burden of obtaining permissions currently borne by the bilateral missions. He suggested a graduated approach, first requesting blanket overflight for emergency evacuations, and next for humanitarian overflights.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: The Turkmen are unlikely to change their preference for bilateral overflight arrangements and have refused to grant blanket rights to anyone but the U.S. Still, any cooperation with NATO such as the emergency planning seminar would be noteworthy given the prominence that the Turkmen attach to their neutrality policy. END COMMENT.
MILES